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Neighbors on Cell Tower Plan: Not in Your Backyard, Either

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Life in the suburbs often comes with its share of worrisome surprises, like the neighbor's barking dog, unkempt yard or odd odors.

Usually, however, those surprises do not include the neighbor's deciding to put up a cellphone tower that is about 10 stories tall.

Connecticut law has firmly established that municipalities have no real say over the placement of cellphone towers. Only the Connecticut Siting Council, in Hartford, can stop a tower, and it rarely does. As a result, some residents are facing intrusive neighbors they never imagined.

In nearby Westport, where the state law was most recently tested and upheld, Verizon bought a vacant house at 2 Sunny Lane with an eye to putting up a 130-foot tower. The town sued, and help poured in from the Connecticut Council of Municipalities and the state attorney general, to no avail. Today, Sunny Lane is a little less sunny. ''How do you throw up a cellphone tower in someone's backyard?'' asked Lorcan O'Connor, who bought the house next door two months before Verizon won the court case. ''This is a residential area.''